

The Illinois & Michigan
Canal National Heritage
Corridor Commission

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Special Meeting held September 25

On September 25, the Commission hosted a special meeting at the Barber-Oberwortmann Horticultural Center in Joliet to discuss the progress and preliminary conclusions of the strategic planning project that began last fall.

History: In the summer of 2002, the Commission formed a "Coordinating Council," consisting of representatives of the Commission, the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, the Canal Corridor Association and the Heritage Corridor Convention & Visitors Bureau. This Council was charged with advising the process of developing an updated vision and goals for the Corridor's future, including how the partners could best work together. The Commission then brought in a team from the National Park Service to help gather information and develop recommendations. With their help, we analyzed 20 years' worth of planning documents, developed a consensus on a long-term vision for the Corridor, and hosted five Open Houses throughout the Corridor in April 2003 to hear what our other partners and members of the public thought.



Linda Dahl of the National Park Service leads the discussion during a special meeting of the I&M Canal National Heritage Corridor Commission.

Today: At the meeting in September, the Coordinating Council presented the summary of this process, including what we had heard from the public. Linda Dahl of the National Park Service Gateway and Regional Planning Center described the issues and possible solutions confronting the Commission and its partners as we face the August 2004 expiration of the Commission's authorization. The challenges she identified included: the slow process of appointing new Commissioners; the Commission's dependence on federal funds and competition for a limited pool of funds; the overlapping of roles and activities by partners; and the lack of funds to support the canal's historic infrastructure.

The Future: The Coordinating Council had discussed the pros and cons of several ways to address the Corridor's future given the current challenges, ranging from the existing Commission setup, to a larger National Park Service role, to a non-profit "management entity" structure. The last option was described as creating a new "Corridor Council" of partners that would advise the Canal Corridor Association acting as the management arm, responsible for managing federal funds and developing a Management Plan for the Corridor that would detail the roles of all the new partners. This engendered a lively debate among members of the Commission and the Coordinating Council, which resulted in an agreement for the Council to meet again in October to work out a more detailed recommendation that will help advise our Congressional representatives as they contemplate possible legislation for the Corridor's future. Stay tuned for future updates, and be sure to let us know your opinions! ♦

Electronic Updates Sent Weekly

Every Friday, staff distributes an electronic bulletin. If you are interested in receiving timely updates and information about the Heritage Corridor, or have information you would like distributed via the E-Bulletin, please send an email to: mary_tano@nps.gov.

Canalport Park

Construction of a full-size replica canal boat should begin soon for the new Canalport Center in Morris. An official groundbreaking ceremony took place on September 24. The boat will be about 76 feet long and 15 feet wide. The cabin will be about seven feet high. Also making their debut were sculptural benches to complement the steel silhouettes and other elements of the I&M Canal Passage Wayfinding System. The benches were inspired by early days of life on the canal, with modular elements based on antique barrels and trunks. The development of the benches was supported by a grant from the National Endowment of the Arts and they were developed by the Illinois Arts Council, Canal Corridor Association, area citizens and local artist Marcia Lega of Joliet. The City of Morris' purchase of the Canalport Park property was made possible through a partnership with the Morris Community Foundation. Several donors have contributed to the construction of the park's canal boat, including the Morris

Home for the Holidays organization, Midwest Generation, and Carpenter's Local Union #916. Plans for the boat are on display at the Morris Area Public Library. Since the canal boat will need a name, a contest will be held. ♦



Ceremonial Shovels used during the groundbreaking at Canalport Center rest on the park's new sculptural benches.

Partnership Project Fund Update

Several of last year's Partnership Projects have now been completed. New murals brighten the City of Ottawa and the I&M Canal Visitors Center at Gaylord Building in Lockport, and for the last year, seasonal banners have proclaimed Lockport "An I&M Canal Town." The Joliet Park District has completed its Mighty Acorns program and the Illinois River Area Chamber of Commerce has moved on to the next phase of its Community Mapping Project. Still in process are a community planning effort, spearheaded by the I&M Canal NHC Civic Center Authority, a video from the Will County Historic Preservation Commission and a Native American Longhouse at Isle a la Cache Museum.

Work has already begun on several of this year's projects. The Friends of the I&M Canal are moving forward with a feasibility study for a canal park near Joliet. Goose Lake Prairie Partners are working hard to develop an interpretive video and displays. The Carbon Hill Historical Society is busy developing a booklet on their community's history, and the Joliet Public Library has just completed a brochure to celebrate the library's 100th Anniversary.

We hope to have the application for this year's Partnership Project Fund available in February of 2004, our 20th Anniversary year. The application will be available on-line at www.nps.gov/ilmi/home.htm ♦

Courier's New Look

On September 9, the I&M Canal NHC Interpreters Group sent eight individuals to a seminar entitled "How to Design Eye-Catching Brochures, Newsletters, Ads, Reports (& Everything Else You Want People to Read)." Interpreters at individual sites are often responsible for designing the flyers and brochures used to advertise their programs. Funds for the training were provided to the Interpreters Group by the Commission. Some of the "tips and tricks" presented during this seminar have been incorporated into this issue of the Corridor Courier. We would like to know what you think about the new look. If you have any comments or suggestions, send an email to our editor at mary_tano@nps.gov ♦

ILLINOIS & MICHIGAN CANAL IN THE NEWS

Historic documents on the web

From an article in the *Herald News*, "Historic Illinois River survey documents available on the web," September 21, 2003.

Handwritten field survey journals covering the survey of the Illinois River between 1867 and 1874 are now available for public viewing on the Illinois Digital Archives Web site. The journals, part of the I&M Canal Regional History Collection at Lewis University, were digitized through funding made available by the Illinois State Library. About 1,100 images were scanned in order and catalogued over a period of four months. Lewis University is the largest depository of historic materials relating to the I&M Canal. Its collection also includes materials related to local history and the development of canals in the United States. Visit the web site at www.elillinois.org/ida to view the digitized journals. ♦

Midwest's Best Trails

From an article by Chuck Haney in *Adventure Cyclist*, "Leg Stretches- Ride some of the Midwest's best rail-trails," July 2003.

The I&M Canal Trail is highlighted as one of the best trails in the Midwest. The article provides information on the history of the I&M Canal, communities and natural areas along the way and access points. According to the author "The trail passes the remains of old locks amidst corn and soybean fields, popping up in small communities where grain elevators still sit high above the horizon. More midwestern treats are located near the trail's western edge where waterfalls tumble and the canyons of the Illinois River at Starved Rock State Park are spectacularly blessed with wildflowers in the spring." ♦

Note* If you find a news article that refers to the canal in your local paper, please let us know. We will try to include a mention of it in future editions of the Corridor Courier. Our editor can be reached at (815)588-6040 or via email at mary_tano@nps.gov

For the Ducks

From an article by Jo Ann Hustis in the *Morris Daily Herald*, "Grant allows for land restoration," September 22, 2003.

Ducks Unlimited, a non-profit organization, was awarded a \$200,000 state grant to convert cropland to wetland near Dresden Island on the Illinois River. The 74-acre site is located between the I&M Canal and the river, just downstream from Dresden Island. Ducks Unlimited will match the award with \$110,000 of its own funds to purchase the property, which will be managed to encourage waterfowl habitat. The acquisition could be the area's largest wetland project since 2000 when the state purchased 850 acres just south of the Illinois River Bridge in Morris. ♦

Bobcats in Corridor

From an article by Gary Wisby in the *Chicago Sun-Times*, "Bobcat finds a home in DuPage woods," September 4, 2003.

After hearing scattered reports for years, forest preserve district biologists found proof that the big cats were on hand. Tracks were found in Waterfall Glen, a 2,474-acre preserve near Darien and the 1,425-acre Greene Valley Preserve near Woodridge. Bobcats often use river corridors for travel. The DesPlaines River is the likely route used by the bobcats from downstate where they are more numerous. Bobcats were listed as a threatened species in Illinois in the late 1970s, but have made a comeback thanks to habitat restoration. In 1998 they were taken off the list. ♦

Recycled Swing

From an article by Michelle Mullins in the *Daily Southtown*, "Swing gone, but not forgotten," September 5, 2003.

The 302 foot long, 130-ton swing bridge was built in 1899. It is 26 feet wide and 40 feet tall. It once crossed the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal linking Romeoville and Lemont, was closed in 1990 and replaced in 1998. Rather than being destroyed, the swing bridge- the only remaining example in Illinois- was preserved, repaired and repainted. The entire bridge was moved north so that it could be used as a passageway into the trails of the Forest Preserve District of Will County and marks the entrance to the Centennial Trail. ♦

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National Heritage Corridor
Illinois and Michigan Canal

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

CORRIDOR COURIER

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Dates to Remember

October 9, 2003	Joint Meeting of the Interpretation & Historic Preservation/ Recreation and Tourism Committees
October 13, 2003	Columbus Day, Office Closed
October 26, 2003	Daylight Savings Time Ends
November 11, 2003	Veterans' Day, Office Closed
November 13, 2003	I&M Canal NHC Commission Meeting
November 27, 2003	Thanksgiving, Office Closed

For more information about events in your community and throughout the corridor, please contact the Heritage Corridor Convention and Visitors Bureau at: (815)727-2323 or visit their website at: <http://www.heritagecorridorcvb.com/>



“for the benefit and enjoyment of the people”

